



Postmark Bayou Chene: A Novel

Gwen Roland

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In the heart of Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin, a letter sent from an isolated settlement, addressed to Hautes-Pyrénées, France, and marked undeliverable, shows up at the Bayou Chene post office. That same day locals find a dog, nearly dead and tethered to an empty skiff. Odd yet seemingly trivial, the arrival of a masterless dog and a returned letter triggers a series of events that will dramatically change the lives of three friends and affect all of the residents of Bayou Chene.

Gwen Roland's debut novel, set in 1907 in a secluded part of Louisiana, follows young adults Loyce Snellgrove, her cousin Lafayette "Fate" Landry, and his friend Valzine Broussard as they navigate between revelations about the past and tensions in the present. Forces large and small—the tragedies of the Civil War, the hardships of swamp life, family secrets, as well as unfailing humor—create a prismatic depiction of Louisiana folklife at the turn of the twentieth century and provide a realistic setting for this enchanting drama.

Roland anchors her work in historical fact and weaves a superb tale of vivid characters. In *Postmark Bayou Chene*, she uses the captivating voice that described the beauty and challenges of the swamp to legions of readers in her autobiographical *Atchafalaya Houseboat*. Her ear for dialogue and eye for detail bring the now-vanished community of Bayou Chene and the realities of love and loss on the river back to life in a well-crafted, bittersweet tribute.

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